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Development Projects

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III. DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS AND ISSUES

***Resource Conservation and Utilization Project**

Sponsor: SECID/RCUP

In January 1979, SECID was selected by AID and His Majesty's Government of Nepal to assist in designing the Resource Conservation and Utilization Project (RCUP) in Nepal. This five-year, twenty million dollar project addresses the broad environmental degradation problems of the mountainous regions of the country. The design phase of this Title XII Project, which involved resource management specialists from nine academic and research centers, was completed in May 1980. The comprehensive fifteen-year strategy generated by the design team serves as the basis for the implementation phase which commenced in July 1980.

The RCUP strategy incorporates two primary approaches. One is the implementation of resource conservation practices and social change procedures to restore and protect the soil, water and forest resource bases. The other is the strengthening of Nepalese institutional capacities to train adequate numbers of skilled technical and supervisory resource management professionals. Analysis of a number of interrelated systems and problems led to the identification of six primary areas of concentration: institutional development, energy alternatives, forest management, range management, agricultural improvement, and watershed management.

The SECID design team and their Nepalese colleagues devised several means of ensuring the active participation of the rural population in planning and carrying out the activities of the project. Extension activities are oriented toward village-level beneficiaries, whose future resource practices will determine the ultimate success of the project. Nepalese technicians of appropriate socio-economic backgrounds are being selected to carry out these extension activities. Conservation initiatives are integrated into the existing panchayat (village group) system to guarantee community participation. Committees and conservation groups are formed at the catchment and panchayat level to promote extension and education programs in efficient conservation practices.

A major component of the RCUP is directed to the selection, training and upgrading of Nepalese professionals in the technical and supervisory skills required to carry out RCUP resource management programs. A multi-tiered educational program has been instituted to supply the selected participants with diploma/certificate training, non-formal training, or advanced degrees as is appropriate for each individual. In-country pre-service training at the diploma and certificate level is provided by the Institute of Renewable Natural Resources. An important element of the training component involves SECID faculty members assisting Nepalese colleagues in establishing another campus of this institute at Pokhara. In-service training of professionals is undertaken at the Ministry of Forests Training Wing in Kathmandu. The purpose of this Training Wing is to produce another level of trainers for conducting sessions at the panchayat level.

SECID specialists provide educational support to these in-country institutions while Nepalese participants are receiving advanced training in the United States. The first contingent of seven participants for U.S. Master's degree programs arrived in March

1980, followed by another seven in January 1981, and three in Fall 1981. To date, three students have returned to Nepal for periods of one to three months to conduct their thesis research in range/pasture management and soil science on topics which directly relate to project implementation activities.

Recognizing the need for professionals to update their concepts and techniques continuously, short-term study and observation tours in the U.S.A. are available to provide specialized training to middle and high-level Nepalese officials.

The lead institutions for RCUP are Duke University, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, and Western Carolina University. Home campus coordinators and the project team are listed below.

Home campus coordinators:

Gerald Stairs, Duke University
Howard Massey, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Merton Cregger, Western Carolina University

Project team leader:

Mark Freeman, Western Carolina University

Project team members:

Robert Adams, VPI & SU
Jan-Willhem Briede, Duke University
William Hart, Duke University
John Lamb, U.S. Department of Agriculture
William Leuschner, VPI & SU
Donald Messerschmidt, Washington State University
Gerald Richard, U.S. Department of Agriculture
Gary White, Western Carolina University

(from SECID report)

***Women in Development Interns Spend Four Months in Nepal**

Sponsor: SECID

Two participants in the Center for Women in Development Overseas Internship Program arrived in Kathmandu, Nepal on January 28th to begin a four month research tour in the country's Gorkha District. Carol Cooper, graduate student in Adult Continuing Education at Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University, and Debra Davidson, graduate student of Socio-Cultural Anthropology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill are cooperating in this project to study the status, attitudes and potential for women to participate in non-traditional roles.

Their program is sponsored by SECID and coordinated by Ellen Fenoglio, Project Manager for the Center for Women in Development. The team research effort is conducted in conjunction with SECID's Resource Conservation & Utilization Project in Nepal, and one

component of their study addresses this project's efforts to incorporate women into training at the Institute of Renewable Natural Resources. These and other efforts to include women in national development initiatives have been greatly hindered by extremely low literacy rates and educational levels among Nepalese women.

Ms. Davidson and Ms. Cooper investigated both formal and non-formal means by which women can become qualified to participate in resource conservation training, and explored alternatives to formal secondary school training for entrance into the Institute of Renewable Natural Resources. They also identified factors involved in women's motivation and opportunity for education and non-traditional employment by interviewing women and constructing a profile of female teachers in a selected district.

Ms. Davidson and Ms. Cooper employed in-depth interviews and participant observation techniques to examine the attitudes and behavior affecting the success or failure of local resource conservation training. They also conducted a training session for women in a selected village, offering non-formal agricultural extension techniques for village use and dissemination.

Debra Davidson and Carol Cooper completed their internship in early June, 1982. Descriptive documentation of their program was published in monograph form this summer by the Center for Women in Development of SECID. For information on the monograph, contact:

Center for Women in Development
SECID
400 Eastowne Drive
Suite 207
Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27514 USA
(telephone: 919-493-4551)

(from SECID Review, June 1982)

***Notes on a Population Strategy for Nepal (excerpts)**

by David E. Mutchler, Agency for International Development Mission to Nepal

The dimensions of the current demographic crisis in Nepal are well known to all of us and I will not recount them here.¹ It is, however, important to recall the results of the 1981 Census² which show a population growth rate of 2.6% annually and which give evidence of the massive unregulated migration that threatens to engulf the Terai. It is enough to mention the results of the 1981 Contraceptive Prevalence Survey which reports that after more than a decade of family planning programs in Nepal only seven percent of eligible couples are contracepting and only 25% of married women know where to get family planning services.³ And, finally, we all recognize that, after several years of recommendations and reorganizations, there is still no effective focus within the Government of Nepal for the monitoring, evaluation or coordination of programs which are essential to the population effort.

Two critical tasks remain from past years. One is that of mobilizing village communities to participate in development projects, whether in agriculture, rural development, health or family planning. The other is that of mobilizing elites, and especially the government bureaucracy. The two problems are intimately related and share some of the same difficulties. The central fact is that structural change threatens established interests, both at the elite and mass level. That is why there is strong opposition to change. And that is why the implementation of development programs is so difficult.

I propose four specific suggestions. The suggestions I propose support policies contained in the Government's Sixth Five Year Plan with respect to mass education, community development, cottage industry and family planning/material child health. Each recommendation, if implemented, would address aspects of the traditional cultural system, while attacking the root causes of high fertility. The process would, however, leave the joint family intact and strengthen its ability to adjust to the deepening demographic crisis, the growing shortage of land, the search for diversified economic opportunity.

A. Compulsory Education for All Village Children

Making primary education compulsory for all village children, girls as well as boys, regardless of caste and regardless of family income, would be the fastest, most effective means of reversing the resource flow from child to parent which lies at the root of high fertility.⁴ Children must be removed from the labor force and at the same time equipped for more productive adult lives. It may be argued that this will temporarily place a heavy burden upon village families which employ large numbers of children in household and farm labor, but that is precisely the point. Government policy to enforce compulsory schooling would immediately raise the cost of children and interfere with their immediate economic usefulness. It should therefore have an immediate effect upon birth rates. Moreover, if children were taught basic skills along with the principles of preventive health and sanitation, they would become more productive farmers and more effective parents.

B. Linking Community Development Assistance to Community Performance

All communities should receive government assistance in providing primary education and family planning, but other government assistance (drinking water, roads, electrification, credit, irrigation, etc.) should gradually and systematically take into account community performance in enrolling children in school, recruiting married couples of reproductive age to family planning and increasing overall community involvement in the planning, design and implementation of development projects.

C. Female Employment in Off-Farm Cottage Industry

The Sixth Plan calls for significant investments in cottage industry. These should take into account community performance in education, family planning and community participation, as indicated above. For maximum demographic impact, cottage industry development should focus exclusively upon employment of women away from their homes in settings which are not compatible with child rearing. In addition, child labor must be prohibited.

D. Community-Based Family Planning Services

Given the low levels of contraceptive availability in Nepal, it is likely that the latent demand for family planning is, even now, much higher than is actually used.

The strategy of selecting (predominantly male) family planning extension workers centrally from among the relatively well educated and then sending them to work in remote villages has its limitations. Only when the village recruits from among its own, supervises its own and controls their remuneration, is there adequate incentive for good service. In this regard, the Panchayat Development and Land Tax (PDLT) authority, suspended in 1979/80, might be reintroduced on a voluntary basis in selected panchayats to test the relative effectiveness of community-based activities financed in large part by the communities themselves.⁵ Surveys in Nepal indicate that individuals spend about Rs. 30 per capita per year from their own resources on health services.⁶ This is in addition to the estimated Rs. 20 per capita which the government spends annually on public health. There is, therefore, a willingness and an ability in rural Nepal to pay for health care. It should be tapped. Current efforts to provide family planning and health services through such village leaders as ex-servicemen⁷ and through such traditional medical practitioners as dhami jhankris⁸ are important experiments in this regard. These individuals are respected members of village communities and, although they are men, they can enlist the women of their families in the provision of services and information. A more intensive effort is needed nationwide to recruit women to all levels of planning and service delivery so that the drive toward decentralization of government services can begin to include these key community resources. Community-based strategies would include referrals for sterilization services when these are available, but would emphasize temporary methods distributed by villagers themselves. Experience in Nepal as well as other countries shows that villagers can be trained to effectively explain and distribute oral contraceptives, condoms and other temporary methods.⁹

A recent study ranks Nepal 87th out of 94 countries in socio-economic indicators that have been shown to be correlated with receptiveness to family planning and with fertility decline.¹⁰ These socio-economic factors include higher literacy, school enrollment, life expectancy, gross national product, percentage urban population and lower infant mortality. From this we can see the need for proceeding expeditiously on all fronts and especially with respect to the demand side strategies outlined above.

In summary, I would encourage practical strategies to implement population programs in Nepal and . . . programs based upon compulsory education, community incentives, female employment off farm, and community-based family planning services.

Footnotes

1 - Cf: Banister, Judith and Shyam Thapa. 1981. The population dynamics of Nepal. Papers of the East-West Population Institute. No. 78. East-West Center: Honolulu.

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2 - The Rising Nepal. Editorial. February 9, 1982. For comparative data based on the 1971 Nepal Census, cf. Nepal. 1980. Atlas of economic development. National Council for Science and Technology. His Majesty's Government. Kathmandu. An analysis of the 1961 Census which compares Indian migration into Nepal with Nepalese migration to India is contained in Weiner, Myron. 1971. The political demography of Nepal. Mimeo.

3 - Nepal. 1982. A preliminary report of the 1981 Nepal Contraceptive Prevalence Survey. Family Planning and Maternal Child Health Project, Kathmandu.

4 - Cf. Caldwell, John C. 1978. A theory of fertility: From high plateau to destabilization. Population and Development Review. 4 (4); and Caldwell, 1976. Toward a restatement of demographic transition theory. Population and Development Review. 2 (3 & 4); as well as, Thadani, Veena N. 1980. Property and progeny: an exploration of intergenerational relations. Center for Policy Studies, Working Papers No. 62, The Population Council. New York.

5 - Jamison, Dean T. 1980. Notes on human resources and development in Nepal. Op. cit.

6 - Ibid.

7 - Nepal. 1981. Proposal to the National Commission on Population. Ex-Servicemen's Organization. Jawalakhel.

8 - Shrestha. Ramesh Man and Mark Lediard. 1981. Faith healers: a force for change. Preliminary report of an action-research project of the Information, Education and communication division, Family Planning/Maternal Child Health Project. Kathmandu.

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10 - Maudlin, W.P. and Berelson, B. 1977. Cross cultural review of the effectiveness of family planning programs. International Population Conference, Mexico.